

Foreword

This manual was developed by the Center for Watershed Protection in cooperation with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Maryland Department of the Environment. Funding for this project was provided by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, under contract number 14.05.980.EPA.056.

The preparation of the manual was greatly influenced by two sets of interviews conducted in late 2004 and early 2005. The first round included interviews with more than 15 state and federal agency program managers to identify current and anticipated state and federal watershed planning requirements and resources. The second round of interviews focused on county and city staff involved in local watershed planning to define the current watershed planning practice in Maryland, and determine local technical needs and desired integration. Those interviewed were invited to review the draft guide as well.

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Additional input was provided by attendees of the User's Guide Review Forum held on November 3, 2005:

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About This Guide

A User's Guide to Watershed Planning in Maryland presents a common watershed planning framework for Maryland communities, assembles planning resources into one place, integrates regulatory drivers, and presents the methods necessary for completing a local watershed plan. Local government staff are the primary audience for this guide. Other groups writing watershed plans in Maryland such as watershed organizations are also encouraged to utilize this framework.

This guide took more than a year to complete and represents the compilation of information gathered from 25 interviews with state agency program managers and local government staff. It also incorporates a review of more than 47 local watershed planning surveys; a review of existing watershed management planning guides; and research on Maryland GIS mapping, monitoring, modeling, and financial resources available to watershed planners.

The guide starts by introducing a basic eight-step framework for developing watershed plans followed by 27 principles of an effective watershed plan. The remainder of the guide is dedicated to describing the methods used to complete the steps and meet the principles. The methods are organized into four broad categories: desktop analysis, field assessment, stakeholder involvement, and management methods.

For first time watershed planning efforts or small local governments that lack the resources and expertise to complete an extensive watershed plan should not be intimidated by the number of methods presented within the User's Guide as many of them are optional. Selecting the methods necessary to complete a watershed plan will largely depend on the amount of funding available and purpose of the plan. Guidance on the minimum methods needed to complete a watershed plan is provided in Chapter 1. Small local governments should also consider utilizing a consultant to complete the plan or completing the plan in several phases.

These call outs are provided throughout the Users Guide to emphasize key points during the watershed planning process.

The format of the guide is primarily web-based with the intent that it will be a living document that is periodically updated and revisited as methods continue to be tested and refined. With this in mind, User's Guide downloadable tools are provided in lieu of appendices and are referenced throughout the guide. This approach keeps the guide slim and readable and easy to update, and users will have easy access to the User's Guide tools they need to complete their plan.

